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Q3(c)

Discuss the efficacy of global conventions to combat international terrorism

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 2 · 15 marks · Contemporary Global Concerns

Contemporary Global Concerns: Democracy, human rights, environment, gender justice, terrorism, nuclear proliferation.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the efficacy of global conventions to combat international terrorism
- Write at 15-mark length

Revision summary

Terrorism law is a bundle of sectoral conventions, not one world statute.

UNSC 1373 and **FATF** gave post-2001 teeth on finance and safe haven.

Hijacking and open sponsorship became harder.

Definitional splits, Charter disputes, and weak territories cap efficacy.

Treaties are a floor; politics and intelligence remain the walls.

Introduction

Global conventions against terrorism are a patchwork of treaties, Security Council decisions, and financial rules. They have narrowed safe havens. They have not produced one agreed crime of terrorism or an end to the tactic.

Body

The legal web

- Sectoral UN conventions cover hijacking, hostages, terrorist bombing, terrorist financing, and nuclear terrorism, rather than one comprehensive definition.
- The 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and the 1997 Terrorist Bombing Convention are the workhorses of extradition and criminalisation.
- Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001), under Chapter VII, bound all members to freeze assets and deny safe haven, a legislative leap beyond ordinary treaty pace.
- The **Financial Action** Task Force standards travel into domestic banking law.

Where efficacy shows

- Aviation and maritime conventions made hijacking a rarer diplomatic bargain.
- Financing rules, listing, and mutual legal assistance have raised the cost of open State sponsorship.
- Extradition webs and INTERPOL notices help when political will exists.

Where efficacy fails

- No comprehensive convention exists because "freedom fighter versus terrorist" still splits the General Assembly.
- Powerful States use exceptional self-defence claims and targeted killings that sit uneasily with the UN Charter.
- Safe havens persist in weak territories. Encryption and informal value transfer outrun old convention text.
- Human-rights blowback from emergency laws can feed the very recruitment conventions aim to dry up.

Net judgment

- Conventions are necessary floor rules. They are not a strategy. Intelligence, politics, and development sit outside the treaty page.

Flow diagram

Sectoral UN conventions -> Financing bombing hijack
UNSC 1373 FATF -> Binding finance rules
Financing bombing hijack -> Partial efficacy
Binding finance rules -> Partial efficacy
No single definition -.limits. -> Partial efficacy

Conclusion

Global anti-terror conventions work best as criminal-law and finance tools against named acts. Their efficacy is limited by definitional deadlock, the veto politics of listing, and the gap between text and ungoverned space. They constrain; they do not cure.

Facts & figures

UNSC Resolution 1373

2001 Chapter VII decision requiring all States to criminalise terrorist financing and deny safe haven.

1999 Financing Convention

Requires States to freeze funds and cooperate against financing of terrorist acts.

FATF

Intergovernmental standard-setter whose recommendations shape anti-money-laundering and counter-terror finance law.

Definition deadlock

The Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism has remained unfinished because of disputes over armed forces and self-determination.